

parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme by notquitepunkrock

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: (they're about 25ish), Aged-Up Losers Club (IT), Alternate Universe - No Pennywise (IT), Alvin Marsh and everything he represents, Angst, Eddie Kaspbrak & Beverly Marsh Are Best Friends, F/M, Fluff, Fluff and Angst, Georgie Denbrough is alive and an amputee, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Implied/Referenced Self-Harm, Losers Club (IT) Friendship, M/M, Other Additional Tags to Be Added, Panic Attacks, Renaissance Faires, Sonia Kaspbrak's A+ Parenting, Stalking, i promise this fic is not all angst, ships are not the main focus but also they are, yeah its out of nowhere what of it

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Georgie Denbrough, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Ben Hanscom/Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough/Mike Hanlon/St Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

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Summary:

Eddie just wants to ignore all of his mom's phone calls, and maybe make enough to finally buy a new trailer. But the annoying rose walker with the cute smile just won't leave him alone.

Richie wants to annoy the cute guy selling elf ears, and bring him flowers the whole run. Finding a new job for the next season probably be a good thing too.

Beverly would really rather forget her entire childhood, and she's

done a pretty good job of it so far. But there's a patron who won't leave her alone, and it's really starting to freak her out.

Mike just wants a nap. And also to figure out what the hell is happening to him every time he's around Stan and Bill.

Bill wants his parents to stop being disappointed in him for once, but nothing he does will ever be good enough for them.

Ben just wants to find a new job after being unfairly fired. But his old boss has it out for him, and he keeps getting distracted by the pretty girl who sells horns.

Stan just wants to survive another show, and maybe take a bath. Maybe in the process, he'll find something to live for.

au where the Losers do renaissance festivals because i decided to project my entire life onto them i guess.

1. and sent him homeward

Author's Note:

this is very loosely inspired by tossertozier's fic & That's For All Time, in that I was reading it, and went like "wait i do ren faire. i could totally write a ren faire au." please go read and love jay's fic because it's really fucking good and he's a fantastic writer.

also hi, 3/4 of my parental unit do/did renaissance festivals, and i've been working them off and on since i was literally two weeks old. i am a Certified Faire Brat. a lot of this story is based on real people, places, and events. i'm changing names and all that jazz, so if, god forbid, you're a rennie reading this fic and something sounds familiar, it probably is. (also please don't try to figure out who i am oh my god that would be awful.)

because of this ^ though, there might be some weird stuff that doesn't make sense to you if you aren't either a rennie (i.e. someone who does faire for a living) or very familiar with rennie life. i try really really hard to not do that, but please tell me if something doesn't make sense! i will edit and also answer questions. i do have a beta but we both miss things. often. we're only human, after all.

also, please keep the tags in mind as you're reading. i'll keep y'all updated on possible triggers in chapter notes, but i don't want to cause anyone harm.

updates will be slow, because at least for the moment i am currently working a show. but they're gonna happen i swear. i've already got 4000 words written yall.

okay that's all, please have fun!!

Two Days Before Opening

Eddie finally pulled into the campground, scrubbing at his tired eyes with the heels of his hands before he opened the door. It would take another forty-five minutes at least to set up his tent, and his EZ Up, and unpack his things before he could finally, *finally* meet up with Mike go get food. The promise of food and his friend was the only thing keeping him going right now.

Next season, he swore, he would have a trailer. He'd been saving for a while, and could just about afford a used pop-up trailer. The thought of having somewhere to sleep that wasn't a fucking air mattress made him grin. It had been almost a year since his old one had broken down, and god, there was nothing worse than having to sleep in a van because it was raining.

He was nearly done with getting things set up by the time Beverly pulled up in her truck, backing her trailer in her camping spot beside his. He glared at the trailer as he unrolled a carpet in front of his tent, underneath the EZ Up.

Beverly hopped out of her truck and moved to unhook her trailer. "You already dropped off the stock trailer, right?" she asked.

"Hi, Bev, nice to see you too," Eddie said sarcastically, rolling his eyes as he set up his grill. "Yeah, it's up with the others. The latex ears are in the van, though, because I'm not an idiot."

"Awesome," she said with a grin. "How was your drive? How was the first half of ORen?"

"Drive was long, I'm fuckin' tired. Faire was good, I had to get more ear wraps before this show. How was Bristol?" Eddie was a little jealous. Ohio was a really fucking good faire, and he'd only had to cover the first five weekends while one of the other girls was out after having a baby, but Bristol was one of the best in the country. He understood why Bev had gotten it - she was a manager, and she'd been working for Lewis since she was fifteen, and it was her home show because she grew up in the area - but still. He would have much rather been there.

“Good,” Beverly said brightly as she shoved the wheel stops against her trailer’s wheels. “You down to help paint more horns tomorrow?”

That made Eddie light up. He really loved painting the horns. “Rad, yes please,” he said eagerly, which made Beverly giggle. He turned back to his set-up, groaned, and moved to set up the camp chairs and citronella candles.

As he finished up, Bev got to work setting up her own outdoor area, complete with her own seats and Christmas lights strung up around the trailer’s awning. When he was finally done, Eddie stood back to admire his work, nodding in satisfaction at the arrangement that would be his home for the next six and a half weeks.

“I’m gonna go find Mike,” he called over to Bev, who was setting up her picnic table. “My cooler’s in the backseat of the van, can you stash stuff in your fridge when you get the electricity on?”

She grinned back at him, shooting him a thumbs-up. “Will do. Movies tonight?”

Eddie nodded his agreement, throwing a wave over his shoulder before heading towards the Gamer’s Encampment on the other side of the campground. A dog chained outside of someone’s trailer barked excitedly at him, and he had to stop to pet one of the stray cats before he made it there.

The Gamer’s Encampment was tucked into a corner of the camp, made up of the tents and trailers of the road crew for the games. A few of the weekenders stayed there too over the weekends, and it was generally the last place that Eddie wanted to be. Gamers, in his experience tended to be loud, dirty, and crude. He was never quite sure how Mike ended up being one.

There were only a couple of gamers besides Mike sitting outside of a trailer when he approached. One of them, whose name Eddie didn’t know, offered him a half-wave, which made Mike glance up.

“Eddie!” Mike called, getting to his feet immediately and darting out of the circle to pull Eddie in for a hug. He was, somehow, even more

ripped than he had been the last time Eddie had seen him, in Florida almost six months before. “Did you get smaller?”

Eddie’s cheeks flushed. “Shut up,” he groaned, shoving against Mike’s side. Mike laughed, ruffling his hair.

Eddie was, unfortunately, a mere five foot seven, and with that combined with the elf ears and occasional fairy wings he wore for work, he’d heard far too many jokes about his height. It didn’t help that Mike was over six feet tall, with huge muscles from years of heavy lifting, first at his family’s farm, and later at fair sites across the country. Next to him, Eddie looked like a dwarf even out of costume.

“So I’m thinking diner food,” Mike said, patting down his pockets. “You driving, or me?”

“You, please,” Eddie said. He didn’t want to get behind a wheel for at least another four days, not after driving sixteen straight hours.

Mike paused, checking his phone with a small frown. “Shoot,” he said, glancing up at Eddie. Eddie could see the apology coming before he even said anything. “My friend needs to get food too, do you mind?”

Eddie breathed a small sigh of relief. For a second, he was worried there’d been some kind of emergency down at the Gaming Glen that Mike needed to go fix, or something. “No problem. Who is it?”

“His name is Bill,” Mike explained, leading Eddie towards the parking lot. “He’s a new henna artist, took Adrienne’s spot after she got kicked out. This is his first year in Derry, but he’s been on circuit for a little while.”

Eddie nodded, wincing. He remembered the major blowout that had followed Adrienne leaving the show. It hadn’t been pretty. He’d never actually gotten all of the details, but her car nearly run him over when she left the site for the last time. “Hope it works out for him.”

The reached Mike’s truck in quickly. There was a red-headed man wearing a flannel and jeans leaning against it, playing idly on his

phone. He straightened up and shoved the phone in his pocket as they approached, smiling brightly.

“H-H-Hey Mike,” he said, giving the other man a quick hug. Then he turned to Eddie. “I’m Bill D-D-Denbrough.”

“Eddie Kaspbrak.” He gave the boy a once over. He seemed nice, and Mike had said he’d done faires for a few years, so there was no risk of a newbie deciding he couldn’t hack it. “Mike says you do henna?”

Bill’s cheeks flushed, and Eddie noticed the way that Mike’s eyes landed on it before quickly looking away. *That* was interesting. “Yeah, I nuh-needed a show b-before In-In-Ingleside and heard about the... uh... the oh-oh-opening,” he had the good graces to look away awkwardly. Eddie understood. Adrienne was kind of a bitch, but she had friends on site, just like everyone else. There were sure to be at least a couple of vendors who wouldn’t be happy with Bill for taking her place.

“Nice,” he said. “I do ears - the rubber elf ear things? And the wire ones. I also do horns and wings at some shows, but Bev has them on lock here.”

Dinner was nice, if a little awkward at first. Mike seemed embarrassed by everything he said, which entertained Eddie to no end. If he didn’t know any better, and by better he meant if Mike wasn’t straight, he would say that his friend had a crush on Bill Denbrough.

Eddie devoured a massive Big Boy burger and a whole strawberry milkshake, much to the awe of Bill. Mike just laughed, made a joke about the shake matching Eddie’s sweater - which was true, if embarrassing - and stole a french fry. Eddie almost didn’t notice the jealous look on Bill’s face at that, but he did, which was even more amusing to him.

He couldn’t wait to tell Beverly. She would be sorry that she hadn’t come with them, just for the gossip opportunity.

They were leaving the restaurant when his phone buzzed in his pocket. Expecting to see it was Bev, he was mid-laugh at a joke that

Bill had told. At the sight of “Mommy” and a picture of his mother, however, his face fell.

“I gotta take this,” he said, voice low. Mike shot him a look of concern, but Eddie stepped away from him and Bill and away from the door. He took a deep breath before answering. “Hi, Mom.”

“Eddie-kins!” his mom screeched in his ear. He winced. God, he hated when she called home. “Where are you now?”

“I’m in Maine, Ma,” he replied. “I told you two days ago.”

Sonia Kaspbrak took a deep breath from the other end of the line, and Eddie rolled his eyes heavenward, ready for the crocodile tears. “Eddie-Bear, you said you’d come home soon. Why haven’t you come home? Why would run away to live with a bunch of dirty carnies, do you know how many diseases you could get?”

Eddie scrubbed a hand over his face. He’d run away to join the faire after getting a job with Bev and their boss, Lewis, six years ago, but his mom still acted like it was a new development every time she called. “You’ve mentioned, Ma,” he sighed. “And we’re *rennies*, not carnies. Rennies are good people, they’re honest.”

“*Eddie*, you haven’t heard all the bad things. Your Aunt Karen said-”

“Aunt Karen has never set foot on a festival site in her life, and neither have you, Ma. It’s safe, I promise.” Or as safe as it could be, anyway. Safe enough, at least, that he didn’t even really mind living in a fucking tent for half the year. “I’ve got a couple weeks off after Derry, I’ll come see you then before I head south, alright? In November, I’ll even stay for Thanksgiving.”

“You won’t be home for Christmas again? *Eddie-kins*, don’t you love me?” She started crying now, big fat tears that made Eddie’s stomach flip with the remainders of childhood guilt. She used to use them on him all the time, as a kid, to get him to do what she wanted, whether that was taking pills he didn’t need or cancelling plans that he’d made, until he was alone and isolated in her apartment. Until he wasn’t even allowed to go to *college*. Until he’d been forced to run away just to get rid of her.

"I love you, Ma," he said, and the sickening part was that he really did. His mom, for all her faults, loved him. She was all he'd had, growing up. Even if she was terrible at actually being a mom, she was still his mother. "But I've got Orlando in December and then I have to help Bev get ready for Gainesville in January."

"That's a month without work, Eddie, where will you *stay*," she wasn't asking, she was telling him. He hated when she did that. He knew she really wanted her to come back to New York after Orlando, but even if he wanted to, it wouldn't make sense. He refused to do it. "I know a nice girl, Eddie, her name is Myra, I told her all about you-"

"*Ma*. I'll be fine. It's been six freaking years. I know what I'm doing." He glanced up, caught sight of Bill and Mike both watching him from by the truck with concern, and carefully schooled his features into a more neutral face. "Six and a half weeks, and then I'll come visit. Promise. Now I gotta go, I've got friends waiting to go back to site. Talk to you soon. Love you, bye."

He hung up before she could respond.

When he got into the truck, both men stared at him for a long moment. "What?" Eddie snapped. He immediately felt bad, especially as Bill's face fell and he quickly turned the face the front. "Sorry, I'm stressed."

"Your mom?" Mike asked.

"Yeah," Eddie said simply, smiling tightly. His answer hung awkwardly in the air for a moment before Mike cleared his throat and started talking about the weird new gamer on road crew, swiftly diverting the subject away from Eddie and his mother. Eddie was grateful, and let the story Mike was telling distract him from his own problems.

And Lord, did he have a lot of them.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from Flower of Scotland (Cover) by The

Red Hot Chili Pipers

2. just a man, nothing more, nothing less

Summary for the Chapter:

someone let mike hanlon take a nap please

Notes for the Chapter:

me: i'm gonna be updating slowly
me, the next day: and here's another update!
listen yall this fic is way more fun to write than i
thought it would be, i'm already partway through
writing richie's chapter and it's just so fun for me.

no warnings for this one, besides a couple brief
mentions of alcohol, but everyone is at least 21 in
this fic so it's fine. there is a character called Crazy
Larry, but I've lowkey tried to imply that he calls
himself Crazy Larry, and everyone else just thinks the
name fits.

One Day Before Opening

Mike was worried about Eddie. Despite the man's insistence that everything was fine, there was a certain slump to his shoulders as he'd walked away from the Gamer's Encampment the night before that concerned him. Bill had even texted him later, asking if Mike was sure Eddie was alright.

Mike said yes, but privately he doubted it.

Unfortunately, he didn't have time to be too concerned with his friend.

The day before opening meant a lot of frantically pulling together finishing touches on the Gaming Glen and all the games within. Mike knew that there were axe handles to retape and knives to sharpen for the throwing walls, a leak to fix in the dunk tank, and repainting at least three counters that had somehow gone unpainted. The Test of Strength wasn't working right, and Mike was the only one who had

any idea what might be wrong, and someone still had to pick up the tomatoes for Tomato Torment.

And that was just the problems that Mike knew about. Who knew what else Jason and Boss, the owner, were dealing with.

It was because of all this that Mike was awake at seven in the morning, showered and dressed and waiting for the toaster strudel he'd pulled out of the freezer to pop up. He wanted nothing more than to crawl back into bed, but instead he forced himself to stay upright.

At least Boss had promised to brew coffee in the back of the archery booth, and Jason was making lunch. There was still something to look forward to.

Honestly, Mike was used to early mornings. He'd grown up on his family's farm in North Carolina and had gotten up at dawn for as long as he could remember. His dad had made a couple of jokes about how Mike could finally slow down, back when he'd first joined the road crew for Boss. Two days a week of work at a renaissance festival didn't sound bad to most people - except that didn't include the time spent on upkeep during the week, and all the driving, and the fact that he was on his feet and yelling at people for twenty hours every weekend.

That didn't mean he didn't love it, though. In the five years that he'd been doing shows, Mike had worked his way up from the kid's games, which were reserved for the newbies and the locals who didn't know what they were doing, all the way to the throwing walls - the big money makers, which were only run by the best gamers they had. He did have the occasional stint in the dunk tank when they were short-handed, that wasn't too bad.

He was one of the first crew members to make it to the Gaming Glen, thermos of coffee and toaster pastry in hand. Boss and Jason were the only ones who were already there, leaning against the counters of the archery booth and having a conversation as he approached. "Hey, ya'll," he called.

Jason took a long drag of a cigarette and then dropped it, crushing it

under the toe of his work boot. "Hey there, Mike," he said. "One more day." He grinned widely, showing off his missing front tooth when he did. Mike nodded, setting his thermos on the counter so that he could eat his pastry.

"What do you need me to do first?" he asked, covering his mouth to avoid spraying both of his bosses with chewed-up strawberry and flakes of bread.

"Sharpen those knives for your game," Jason told him. "Don' worry about the axes, I'll have Truce take care of 'em when he gets here. When you finish those, I need TOS fixed. Crazy Larry and I'll do the tank."

Okay, that was workable. Mike could do that, no problem. He could get those done, and still have time before lunch if he started soon. "When you finish up, call me, Birds of Prey needs someone to help 'em set up a tent sometime after eleven," Boss added. "'Parently only one of their guys knows what he's doing and no one is listening to 'im."

Well, there went the plan of finishing before lunch. Mike nodded, swallowing the last bite of his breakfast and grabbing his coffee. He walked around the back of the booth to get the tub full of knives from the back room, and within minutes, he was perched on a bench and sharpening them with practiced ease.

The rest of the crew slowly trickled in, all looking just a bit like zombies. Except for Crazy Larry, who was always just a little too hyper for his own good, but that was fine. He was great in on Jacob's Ladder for that very reason.

He watched them get their assignments and drift off to various games to work. There were five guys and one girl on the crew right now, not counting Boss and Jason, and they were all good guys, in Mike's opinion. A bunch of loud-mouths, maybe, and Bess flirted way too much with Mike when she got drunk, but good nonetheless.

Someone set up the radio and switched it to the rock station, and Mike zoned out as he worked to the sounds of Led Zeppelin and ACDC.

It was around 11:45 when he finished with both jobs, wandering up to the archery booth to get some more water. He was proud of himself for finishing so quickly, especially since he'd figured out what, exactly, was causing the Test of Strength to not actually send the puck up to hit the bell in only a couple of minutes. It had been a quick fix, just needing to change the way things were positioned and add another bolt to one side of the lever.

He'd already sent Boss a text, who'd told him where the Birds of Prey tent was located, and would head there as soon as he had a drink.

In truth, Mike didn't want to help anyone set up a tent, especially not a bunch of people who had no clue what they were doing. Boss said it was a marquee-style tent, which meant it was big and had wooden posts holding up the sides and supporting the peak. It would really be a four-person job, and he was almost certain that it would end up being him that did all the work, which he really wasn't feeling. Mike was a nice guy, but he was just so *tired*.

Still, he crumpled his finished water bottle down into a disk, grinning as it flattened almost completely, and tossed it in the recycling bin by the door of the booth. With a deep breath, he geared himself up, and started the long walk across site.

Everywhere he looked on his way to the field where the tent was located, there were people getting their booths and tents set up for the next morning.

He waved at Bill as he passed his henna booth, which he and a young woman with long strawberry-blond hair were filling with pillows and wooden chairs. Bev and Eddie were setting up the horn cart a little way down the road, a rack that would soon be covered with fairy wings propped up next to it. Mike recognized a few other people wandering site or setting up booths, but he did nothing more than nod at a couple of them.

The Birds of Prey tent was near the jousting field, way out at the end of the fairsite. It was, surprisingly, mostly set up by the time that Mike got there, but the people inside were clearly having issues with

the support stakes and attaching the actual walls. “Y’all need help?” he called once he got close enough.

A man standing outside of the tent looked up, waving Mike over. “Are you Michael?” he asked. Mike was slightly distracted by the man’s dark brown eyes and neat golden curls, but he managed to nod and pretend that his throat wasn’t going dry at the sight of him. The man stuck out his hand. “Stanley Uris. We’ve gotten pretty far, but apparently my guys don’t know how to put down stakes.”

Mike nodded. “I can tell,” he said. “You got a hammer?”

He watched Stanley disappear around the side of his van. He was completely baffled by the fact that anyone could look so good in a pair of khaki shorts and a blue button down, and how he managed to keep them pristine while setting up a tent in this weather. It was fall, technically, but apparently Derry hadn’t yet got the memo, and Mike had been sweating through his t-shirt for the past few hours.

He jumped a little when Stanley came back, this time holding a sledgehammer. “Will this work?” he asked, holding it out for Mike to take.

Mike nodded, and immediately set to work hammering in the stakes that Stanley’s crew had somehow missed. He finished quickly, way quicker than he expected to. To his surprise - and relief - when he looked up he found that they’d figured out how to get the walls on without any help, and had moved onto actually setting up the inside of the tent.

“Thanks for the help,” Stanley said when he noticed that Mike was done. “I don’t know what was so hard about hammering in some stakes but it was giving us so many issues.”

Mike shrugged, wiping his sweaty hands off on his jeans. “Sometimes stuff that seems like common sense really just throws us for a loop,” he replied. “Let me give you my number, you can let me know if anything else comes up, alright?”

Stanley pulled out his phone, thumbing through it for a few moments as he set up a contact for Mike.

Mike shifted uncomfortably in the awkward silence. “So, birds, huh? That’s cool.” Immediately, he cursed his own awkwardness. What kind of bullshit question was that?

Stanley, however, lit up. “Yeah! We’re an educational subset of a bird sanctuary in the area,” he said. His voice was a lot lighter and more excited than it had been in their short previous conversation, where he’d been only vaguely invested. He looked thrilled to have a chance to talk about his work. “We do festivals all over the area, and we’re really trying to promote education and interest in raptors.”

“That’s really awesome,” Mike said. He’d never admit it, but Stanley was cute when he got excited. “So the birds...”

“All of the ones we use for this stuff were raised in captivity and wouldn’t thrive if we released them. Right now, we’ve got two red-tailed hawks, a kestrel and a peregrine falcon, and one great horned owl,” Stanley explained. “We’re gonna do two shows every day, and have photo ops and stuff. Unfortunately, I’m the only one of us who does the renaissance festivals on a regular basis, so none of these guys knows how to put up something more complicated than an EZ-Up.”

Mike nodded in understanding. “These things are a bit more complicated than that,” he agreed. He handed the phone back to Stanley. “I gotta get back to the games, but let me know if you need anything, Stanley. Or if you just want someone to talk about birds with.”

He was a few steps away when the man called back to him. “Call me Stan,” he said.

“Then you can call me Mike,” he replied, turning back just long enough to wink at the other boy. Stan’s cheeks turned pink, and Mike pretended he didn’t notice. He called “text me,” over his shoulder as he walked away, and tried to ignore the butterflies in his stomach as he did.

He genuinely hoped that Stan would text him, and not just about tent problems. Mike decided he didn’t have time to analyze that thought too closely. Besides, those butterflies were probably just hunger. It

was lunch time, after all.

Except he knew that wasn't it. God, he needed a drink - hopefully there would still be beer left when he got back to the archery booth, if the rest of the crew hadn't already drank them all the moment they were called up for a lunch break. Mike deserved one.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from Tura Lu by The Bollox which is my favorite Celtic punk song in the world rn lol

3. brave are the hearts that beat

Summary for the Chapter:

richie is a bi disaster!

Notes for the Chapter:

look at that ~edgy~ chapter title its not even an edgy lyric, it's literally from the unofficial Scottish national anthem wow what an edgelord

ANYWAY hi hello, i'm posting this at 11pm on a Sunday which is how you know that I love this fic because i literally was at faire from 8 to 7. fun fact, richie is doing my old job. he's also better at it than i was lol.

no warnings for this one, except the slightest, most subtle reference to homophobia, but it's really really small.

Opening Day

The basket hanging from Richie's arm swung wildly as he walked towards the opening gate. There was a crowd forming just beyond the closed gates, and if he laid on the charm just right, he could sell half his basket of roses within minutes of the first cannon. If he was going to be a Bud Stud for the first time in five years, he was going to be a damned good one.

Richie had started out as a Bud Stud - a male rose walker - at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire in California, way back when he was nineteen years old and just trying to make enough money for his next hit. When the show had come back the next year, he'd been cleaned up and sobered out, and yet he'd still gone straight to the Games and begged to be put in the Tomato Torment booth. He'd been good at it too - Richie didn't love insult comedy, but it wasn't hard for him to make fun of strangers all day. He had been, in fact, the best Tomato Guy that the gaming company he worked for had in years, and they'd

immediately invited him to join the road crew.

Five years of getting hit in the face with tomatoes every weekend, and they'd decided to drop him just because he'd flirted with the wrong guy.

Whatever. Straight guys were so *fucking* sensitive.

Richie made it to the front gate right as the cannon fired, and he grinned as he watched the steady stream of patrons began to file in. He stood a few feet back, and waited until he saw the perfect victims passing by.

A couple - young, probably only around nineteen or so - approached. The girl was wearing full garb, corset and full skirts and all. The boy was wearing a pair of jeans and t-shirt, without even a drinking horn or silly hat to make it look like he wanted to be there. Richie stepped out in front of them, hoisted his basket higher so he rested it against his hip, and grinned brightly at the pair.

"Good *day* , m'lord!" he cried in his obnoxious false British accent. "Buy a flower for your lovely lady, mayhaps?"

The guy bristled. "She doesn't need one," he said, throwing an arm around her shoulder. The girl frowned just a bit, looking dismayed, which Richie was quick to note. So she wanted one - *good*.

Richie feigned a loud gasp, grasping at his chest. "Does she not deserve a rose as lovely as she?" he asked, voice raising just enough that a few heads of surrounding patrons turned. The girl giggled awkwardly, staring with hopeful eyes at the basket on Richie's arm.

"I- She- Not right now," the guy said, glancing between his girlfriend and the surrounding crowd.

Richie gasped again, and reached into his basket. There was a small pile of red roses painted with gold, King's Roses, which the king paid for at the beginning of each show day to pass out to patrons as the rose walkers saw fit. He handed one to the girl with a flourish. "Since your man does not see your worth, I gift a rose to thee," Richie said with the smile that he knew made him look more attractive than he

was, and a side-eyed glare at her boyfriend. She took the flower with another giggle, and Richie turned on his heel to walk away.

He only moved a couple of feet before the guy was yelling for him to stop. He grinned to himself - hook, line, and sinker. "Wait, okay, fine, how much are they?" the man asked, sounding embarrassed.

Richie turned back to him. "A mere four pounds for a regular rose, or five for a painted one. Multicolored and sunflowers are six pounds, and the carnations are only three," he said brightly.

The man pointed at two roses - one red, and one painted with purple and blue that matched the girl's corset. "Those ones," he said, turning towards his girlfriend. She nodded, looking thrilled with the whole thing. Richie didn't blame her, considering that she likely hadn't expected to get even one, let alone the three she now had.

"Nine pounds then, ten if you like me," Richie said, holding out the two roses.

The man handed over a ten dollar bill. "Keep the change," he said, awkwardly shifting between his feet. He refused to look Richie in his eyes.

"Thank you, m'lord," Richie said, bowing low. "I will write ballads of your kindness. Like this one: There once was a man-"

"Yeah, okay, bye now," the man said, grabbing his girlfriend's hand and pulling her away before Richie could launch into song. Richie was thrilled - that couldn't have gone better if he'd tried. He pulled out his bank, adding the ten dollars into it before he shoved it back into the pouch attached to his belt.

One sale down. So many more to go.

He managed to sell most of his basket without ever getting too far from the gate before he glanced at the clock tower, which read that it was practically eleven-thirty. He had to go load up his basket again before the parade.

Richie hurried back through the streets, pushing his floppy brown muffin hat back when it started slipping into his eyes. He managed to sell a few more flowers on his way, so there were only a handful of flowers left in his basket, save for the king's roses. It was just as he'd finished putting his money back into his pouch after one of those sales that he looked up, right into the brown puppy dog eyes of the man selling elf ears at a cart on the corner.

The man was short, with long rubber elf ears painted to match his skin pretty damn flawlessly, and a pair of orange fairy wings on his back. He was wearing an elaborate bright yellow tunic over brown tights, and several belts were wrapped around his waist, each one laden down with pouches and potion bottles and about three different fox tails. His left ankle had a string of bells around it, and he had dramatic sunflower-themed eye make up painted onto his face. There was a delicate looking circlet wrapped around his head, and glitter in his hair. His costume was actually pretty impressive, in Richie's opinion, and absolutely none of it matched the glare he was giving Richie right at that moment.

"What?" he called when the crowd between them broke, voice tight. Richie jumped, suddenly realizing he was staring at the adorable man with fairy wings. No wonder the guy was looking at him like a creep. He paused for only a second before jumping into action.

"Good fairy," Richie said brightly, bounding across the street to stand in front of the man. "I come bearing a present for you on this fine day."

The fairy's cheeks flushed pink. "W-What?" he asked, looking baffled and embarrassed at the same time, and somehow that made him even cuter.

Richie carefully disentangled his last sunflower from the bottom of his basket, making a mental note to throw six bucks of his own into the bank to cover it. "For you," he said with an exaggerated bow and a wink. The man reached out to take it, but Richie pulled it back. "Wait, wait, wait. It comes with a price. Thou must tell me thy name."

The man sputtered for a moment, looking annoyed. As Richie stood

upright again, he held the flower above his head, far out of reach. Just to piss him off. After a few moments of staring at Richie, the fairy seemed to give up. "Ugh, fine. Eddie, my name is Eddie," he mumbled. Then, louder and with a passable British accent, he added, "Or Zephyr, if you want my fairy name."

Richie's smile widened. "Well then this, Lord Eddie Spaghetti, is for you," he said. He handed over the sunflower as the man - Eddie - sputtered indignantly.

"I gave you two different names and that was neither of them," he protested. Richie just laughed.

"Close enough," Richie said, winking again. Eddie looked like he wanted to say something else, something that probably wasn't family-friendly, but Richie felt his phone buzzing in his pouch and winced. "Now I must leave you, fair Zephyr, as my magic sundial is informing me that I may be late for the King's parade. I shall see you forthwith!"

And with that, he spun on his heel and half-ran to the florist's booth, leaving Eddie staring at him as he went.

Kaylee, his manager, was waiting for him, her arms crossed and glaring from underneath her bangs as he slipped inside the booth. "You have five minutes to refill your basket, and five after that to get into the parade line, or you're going to miss it, Richie," she said, tapping her foot.

"I know, I know, I'm sorry. I had one last delivery," he explained, running to the freezer where the extra roses were kept. He snatched out a handful of regular roses counting them quickly before tossing them into his basket. Next were a handful of painted roses, and two new sunflowers. He paused as he added them to his total on the chalkboard hanging on the wall, glancing up at her with a sheepish smile.

Haylee looked unimpressed.

“Who was it so important to deliver to that it couldn’t wait thirty fucking minutes for you to walk the parade?” she asked, one eyebrow raised. “If you miss it, I’m throwing Little One in there instead. I really stuck my neck out for you on this job, don’t fucking blow it on day one.”

Richie rolled his eyes, pulling out his phone just long enough to look the time. “I’m fine, I’ve got like five minutes more than you think I do. Calm down,” he said, flashing her the screen and then shoving the phone back into his pouch. “Also, if Izzie *wants* to do parade, I’ll gladly give up my spot. I don’t mind.”

Haylee shook her head. “We’ll see,” she said, icily, but there was a small smile on her face that told Richie she wasn’t actually mad at him. At least, not anymore. “Seriously though, who was the delivery?”

Richie ducked his head, hiding behind the overgrown curls so she couldn’t see his face. “Eddie? Fair name Zephyr? He sells ears and dresses like a fairy,” he said.

“Was it from Beverly?” she asked, tilting her head with a small frown. Richie shook his head, feeling his cheeks heat up.

“Nah, it was... a secret admirer,” he said, suddenly very interested in the water tube that was refusing to go on the stalk of his last sunflower. Haylee looked surprised, and also like she wanted to say something more, but Richie’s phone began to buzz again. He straightened up, covered the stems of his flowers once more, and sent her a wide grin. “Welp, look at the time, I really must be going. See you, Haylee!”

With that he darted out of the booth, hurrying towards the gate where the parade was lining up.

The parade was a daily event at most faires, including Derry. It was a procession of the cast and musicians headed by the royal family and their guards, that wound its way through the entire fairsite and ended at the jousting field. Vendors - or, more accurately, their employees or children - were encouraged to walk the parade with banners advertising their booths. Richie, who was famed for how he

thrived as the center of attention, loved it.

He slid into place right next to a pretzel guy, one of the men who carried around a giant T-shaped post with pretzels hanging off of it. They had a small pocket attached to their belts to help support the post while they were walking, but Richie was sure it was hard work. He recognized this dude as a guy he'd seen around a couple of faires' campgrounds on occasion, but Richie didn't think he'd ever actually met him.

"Running a little late, huh?" the guy asked, sending Richie a sympathetic smile.

Richie nodded. "Just a bit," he said. "I'm Richie. You?"

"Ben Hanscom," the guy replied. He readjusted his grip on the post full of pretzels to hold out a hand, which Richie shook.

Ben was a big guy - even taller than Richie was, with broad shoulders and thick arms. He held himself like he wasn't quite used to attention, his shoulders curving inward ever-so-slightly like he was trying to look smaller than he was. "Nice to meet ya, Haystack," Richie said. "This your first faire gig?"

Ben snorted. "Hardly. I've been on the road for three years now. Used to work for..." he paused, looking uncomfortable. "For Bowers Kilts. Before I got fired last show, anyway. I came up to Derry anyway because I needed a job, got lucky that they needed a pretzel guy."

Richie winced. "Fuck those guys," he said seriously. The Bowers Kilt Company sold cheap, shitty kilts for low prices, and was owned by Butch Bowers and his son, both of whom were massive assholes. Richie was fairly certain that the majority of their product was buy-resell, but if it was, Bowers definitely wasn't telling.

"Yeah," Ben agreed. He looked like he wanted to say more, but the drums started from further up the line, and the parade began to move.

Richie shoved all thoughts of Bowers out of his mind, and focused on walking, handing a couple of King's Roses out to small children, and

waving exuberantly at Eddie-slash-Zephyr when he passed by his cart. He refused to let his mind wander past which food booth he planned to stop at for lunch after the parade, instead focusing all of his energy on smiling at the passersby.

He had a feeling this show was going to be a good one.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title is from Scotland the Brave, which I guarantee you've heard even though you wouldn't know it, as it is the one that bagpipers play in every single movie about Scotland ever

4. d-d-d-don't you fucking know this is the wrong side of the road?

Summary for the Chapter:

rest in pieces ben hanscom

Notes for the Chapter:

i've been listening to pat the bunny songs on repeat
please help

warnings for henry bowers' existence and
descriptions of a minor panic attack

Opening Weekend - Sunday

After two days of walking around the site, Ben was exhausted. His feet ached inside his boots despite the insoles and the bandages he'd put on his heels to protect from blisters in advance. His thighs and arms were sore, and he had a knot the size of Kansas in the back of his neck.

His pedometer said he'd walked nine miles each day. He didn't doubt it was actually more than that. His feet certainly ached enough to say otherwise. Getting to put away his post after last cannon was a relief, and he was very pointedly not thinking about the fact that he had to do it all over again the next weekend. Just the thought had him wanting to turn into a pile of goo on the floor of the food booth.

"Okay, that's one hundred twelve that you owe me, and you keep the rest," said Markus, the man in charge of the bakery. "Not fantastic, but not bad for opening Sunday."

Ben shrugged. "It was too warm, no one wanted food," he said with a frown. He contented himself with the fact that he'd done better than Jake, who was selling jerky. If people didn't want pretzels in the heat, they *really* didn't want sticks of dried meat.

"Heat zombies," Markus said knowingly, counting out the money Ben

owed him out of the stack. He handed the rest of it over, a little over two hundred in all. Not much. Not nearly as much as Ben had made selling kilts, even if the Bowers were some of the worst paying vendors on circuit.

He was quick to wave goodbye and head for the campground. Ben knew that Henry liked to stay at hotels instead of on site, and he was just hoping that the man was still closing up his booth, or even already gone.

There was no such luck.

As Ben stepped through the gate that separated the actual fair site from the behind-the-scenes and started to cross the road, he heard an excited shout and the sound of an engine to his right. Ben jumped backwards just in time to avoid being hit by Henry Bowers in his truck. Bowers whipped right past Ben, window rolled down so he could hold up a middle finger and yell, “you’re dead, fatty!” out of it as he past.

Ben’s heart pounded in his chest. If he’d been a fraction of a second slower in his reaction time, he would have been hit. What the *fuck*. He looked down for a moment to get his bearings, barely able to breathe. It felt like he was having a panic attack, even though Ben was pretty certain he’d never had one in his life. He couldn’t breathe, his heart was pounding, and he was shaking so hard he could barely stay upright. Even his vision was hazy, black spots dancing at the edges in an alarming way.

God, he could have just *died*.

“Jesus, are you alright?”

His head shot up, which didn’t help with the hazy vision or the dizziness, and he found himself staring right into the gray-green eyes of a fairy. “What?” he asked, eloquent as usual.

“That truck almost hit you,” she said. “Do you need to sit down?”

Ben nodded dumbly, and let the girl lead him to a bench behind one of the booths next to the gate. He expected her to leave him once he

was sitting, but, to his surprise, she sat down beside him. Once he had gotten over some of the shock of the encounter, Ben raised his head to look properly at her.

He almost wished she didn't.

The thing was, she was *gorgeous*. Ben had seen her as he'd done his rounds that day, gleefully helping people pick out horns and fairy wings like the iridescent blue ones that she was wearing, and he had thought she was cute. Up close, she was more than cute.

Her red hair curled softly around her face, falling just below her chin. Her eyes were bright, and filled with concern - concern that was, ridiculously enough, directed at *Ben* - and he was close enough that he could practically count the freckles on her pale cheeks.

She was beautiful.

What little breath Ben had managed to get back was stolen just looking at her.

"You- I- Hi," he managed, cursing his own awkwardness. It was a wonder that he could talk to people all day without stumbling all over himself, but when presented with *her* he'd managed to fuck it up in a matter of seconds.

"Hi," she said. "Are you alright?"

Ben took stock of himself. Besides his ridiculous awestruck reaction to her, he was alright. Henry hadn't hit him, and he was startled and shaking still, but he'd mostly regained the ability to breathe. "I'm mostly fine," he decided. "Fine enough to get back to the camper, anyway."

The girl frowned. "Let me walk you," she said. "You looked like you were going to pass out for a minute there."

Ben felt his cheeks turn red. "Really, it's no big deal," he said. "Henry wouldn't have actually hit me, anyway. Just scared me, is all." He tried to pretend that he really believed that. It wasn't convincing, even to his own ears.

The girl grimaced, but didn't comment. "Even if you're fine, I'd still like to walk you. It'll make me feel better," she said, and, well. Ben couldn't say no to that, which he supposed must have been the point of it.

He nodded and stood up, eyes fluttering closed as the world shifted beneath his feet. When it was stable again, Ben took a couple of tentative steps forward, deeply satisfied when he didn't stumble at all. The girl waited for him, falling into step beside him and looking both ways exaggeratedly as they reached the road. "I'm Beverly," she said suddenly, just as they crossed to the small footpath that led into the campground. "You can call me Bev."

"Ben," he replied.

"It sounds like Henry Bowers has it out for you, Ben," Beverly said, sounding concerned. Ben still didn't understand why she seemed so worried about him. It wasn't like she knew him, or anything. In Ben's extensive experience, people didn't tend to worry about other people unless it was someone they knew, and sometimes not even then. "Is there a *reason* he's trying to kill you?"

Ben's face flushed impossibly redder, and he found himself looking at his feet instead of in front of him. Because of that, he nearly walked right into a tent, and was only saved by Beverly grabbing hold of the sleeve of his tunic at the last minute and pulling him out of the way.

"I... used to work for Bowers," Ben explained, trying to keep his voice steady. "I said some stuff I shouldn't have to the wrong people, and got fired. Henry thinks I'm trying to kill their business or something, I guess. Retribution."

"Your life is worth a little more than their business, I think," Beverly joked, but there was something in her tone that felt more serious than it seemed on the surface. "In all honesty, if you ran them off of the road, I might have to marry you."

Ben cleared his throat and looked away. "All I did was piss them off," he said bitterly. Beverly sent him a sympathetic look that he pretended not to see. A few moments later, they were standing in front of his camper, as embarrassingly beat up and sad as it was.

"I'll see you soon, Ben," Beverly said with a smile that lit up her whole face. She looked hesitant for a moment, then pulled a Sharpie out of one of the pouches on her belt. "Hand."

Confused, Ben held out his hand. She scrawled a phone number up his inner forearm, writing her name just above it. "Text me."

"O-okay," Ben managed. She was gone before he managed to get the words out.

The first thing Ben did once he got inside was put Beverly's number into his phone. The second thing he did was take a nice long shower, using up most of his hot water to do it. Showering in a camper sucked ass, especially for someone as tall and broad as Ben, but he just didn't have the energy to drag his ass to the truck stop and then pay ten bucks to get clean.

(The sudden, unrelenting fear that he would see Henry coming for him with intent to actually hurt him if he left the camper again didn't help.)

Once he was showered and changed, Ben flopped into bed with the book he'd been reading - a biography of Bonnie Prince Charlie of Scotland - and his phone. With shaking hands, he sent a text off to Beverly.

Ben: Hey, it's Ben! Thank you for looking out for me today. :)

He plugged the phone into the charger next to his mattress, opened his book, and leaned back against the pillows.

Ben fell asleep before he even finished the page.

He woke up to sunlight streaming through the window by his bed, and someone pounding on the door of the camper. As he sat up, Ben groaned. His entire body ached, especially his back and his legs. And his arms. And his everything.

When he opened the door, he blinked in surprise at the sight of Richie the Bud Stud standing in front of him. "Richie?" he said, confused.

"Hiya, Benny Boy," Richie said brightly. "Ready to go on an adventure with my pal Bill and I?"

"How did you figure out which trailer was mine?" Ben asked instead, brows creasing in confusion. It wasn't that he *minded* seeing Richie, or that he'd somehow found his camper without Ben ever telling him which one was his, or even that he'd been woken up. It was just that he was completely and utterly baffled.

"Word on the street is a powerful thing, Haystack," Richie replied. "Anyway, Bill and I are going into Bangor for the day. You should come."

"Why me?" Ben asked, genuinely confused by the proposition. Because really, why would Richie invite Ben along on a trip when he'd only met him two days before and they'd only hung out before parade and on their lunch breaks? Especially when he already had a friend going. He was baffled, well and truly baffled.

Richie rolled his eyes. "Because I like you, Benward," he said. "And because you and Bill both need more friends. And because I heard from a redheaded little birdie that a certain dickhead ex-boss nearly ran you down with his car last night, and I figure getting you away from the jerk would be a good idea."

Ben suddenly felt his heart swell at the goodness that was Richie Tozier. "Give me ten to get changed?" he asked, opening the door a little wider to let Richie in.

"Take all the time you need, Haystack," Richie said stepping up into the camper and immediately dropping onto the couch. "Bill won't be up for another thirty minutes anyway. I'll just wait right here."

It wasn't until Ben had gone to the restroom, changed clothes, and was microwaving a pair of breakfast burritos for himself and Richie - who'd claimed he wasn't hungry even as his stomach growled in protest - that he remembered to check for a text from Beverly.

His heart was in his throat as he finally picked up his phone, glancing through the notifications. A couple of emails, some Twitter posts, and... and a text from Beverly that seemed to break through all of it and draw his attention immediately.

Beverly: hi Ben! I hope you're ok now! lmk if you need anything, even if it seems silly or u just want a friend or something!! :)

Ben's stomach twisted.

Fuck. He had a crush on Beverly.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from More About Alcoholism by
Ramshackle Glory, which is straight fuckin' bop.

5. get the braves to get out of bed in the morning

Summary for the Chapter:

give Beverly the world please

Notes for the Chapter:

did i post already today? yes. do i care? no. this chapter was originally gonna be about bill, and i had the whole thing written and everything and then i hated it with a passion. then i wrote this chapter in about an hour, and liked it a million times better. does this fic have a plot? maybe. we'll see.

warnings: beverly has a ptsd related panic attack, and there's some references to her dad in this one. please take care of yourself! The worst of it is probably from "Several hours later..." to "Sure enough, it was just Mike..." but there's a couple little bits tossed in after that.

if you would prefer a recap, toss me a private message on tumblr at eddiesnapback and i'll tell you what you need to know.

Week One (Monday)

Beverly woke up on Monday morning to Eddie pounding on the door of her trailer. When she swung it open, her best friend was standing there with a bouquet of half-dead roses clutched tightly in one of his fists. His face was bright red.

Beverly raised her eyebrows. "Eddie, you're sweet, but not my type," she said with a grin. Eddie's face got even redder, if that was possible, and the look in his eyes got even more murderous.

"Who the *fuck* keeps sending me roses?" he asked, dropping the flowers. They landed on the steps outside of her trailer in a solid heap of color. "I've been up all night trying to figure it out and I've

got *nothing*. ”

Beverly rolled her eyes at his dramatics. “You want some coffee?” she asked, stepping out of the way of the door. Eddie nodded miserably, climbing up into the trailer. She slammed the door behind him harder than she meant to, and winced. Someone was going to yell at her for that later, she could feel it.

Neither of them spoke while she started up the coffee machine, pausing just long enough to turn on the small radio she kept on top of her fridge. Country music filled the trailer, and she hummed along to Carrie Underwood’s voice as she shuffled around the tiny kitchenette. Eddie watched her from the dinette, a tiny pout on his face.

Beverly had poured two mugs of coffee and slid into the booth across from Eddie. “Okay, what’s so important about these flowers that you woke me up at,” she glanced at the clock above the stove, “seven ‘o’ clock in the morning on a fuckin’ Monday?”

Eddie had the good grace to look guilty. “I didn’t realize it was so early,” he said quietly, biting on his lower lip. “I’m sorry, Bev, it’s no big deal.”

The pathetic look on his face hurt Beverly’s heart. “It’s fine,” she said, waving her hand in the air like she was brushing aside the pained look on his face. I’ve got a couple questions for you, anyway.”

He still looked hesitant, so she prodded him with her toe. After a long pause, he finally spoke. “Someone keeps sending me roses through that one fucking Bud Stud - you know the one, tall, lanky, asshole?” he said. Beverly hid a grin inside her coffee mug. She knew exactly which one he was talking about, because Eddie had come by her cart to complain about the ridiculous, cute Bud Stud who kept annoying him Saturday afternoon. “I just... I got rose bombed yesterday. Rose bombed! Who would spend the money to rose bomb *me* , of all people?”

He looked so fucking confused, a small frown on his lips and his eyebrows pulled together. Beverly hated that look. She knew what it meant. Eddie didn’t think that he was worth anything, and he was baffled to find out that wasn’t the case. She hated that.

“Eddie, what do you mean you got rose bombed?” she asked.

He stared at her. “Every hour, new rose,” he said, gesturing towards the door of the trailer, and, likely, the pile of roses beyond it. “That’s *eight* roses, plus the *three* I got on Saturday and the sunflower.”

Beverly raised her eyebrow. Someone had sent Eddie a dozen flowers over the course of the weekend, and something told her that it wasn’t a coincidence. “That’s really sweet,” she said carefully, watching her friend’s face.

Eddie groaned, dropping his head to the arms he’d crossed on the table in front of him. Beverly reached over to move his untouched coffee mug out of the way. “Someone is messing with me,” he decided. He lifted his head up to look at her, and Beverly was startled to see tears forming in his dark eyes. “Why would someone do that?”

“Are you sure that it’s a joke?” she asked, frowning. That didn’t seem right. She didn’t know who *was* sending Eddie roses, but she doubted it was meant to be cruel. And if it was, well, Mike had taught her to throw knives and she was *damned* good at it. Anyone who messed with her best friend was going to find that out the hard way.

Eddie stared at her. He looked genuinely surprised that she would suggest otherwise. “Of course it is, Bev,” he said. “People don’t... they don’t *like* me.”

Her heart broke for him as he wiped tears away quickly. She looked away, because if there was one thing she knew about Eddie Kaspbrak, it was that he hated to let people see him cry. “Do you want me to change the subject?” she asked, glancing his way just long enough to see Eddie nod miserably. “Cool. Do you know a Ben Hanscom?”

There was quiet for a moment, and she heard Eddie finally take a sip of his coffee before he answered. “Used to work for Bowers, right? Kinda big guy.”

Beverly nodded, her cheeks turning pink. She thought of the text she’d sent him the previous night, which was still unanswered. She hoped it was because he’d fallen asleep, and not because he’d decided he didn’t want anything to do with her. “Do you know why he got

fired? I think... no, I *know* that Henry has it out for him.” She turned back to look at him now, relieved to see that, except for his flushed cheeks and red-rimmed eyes, Eddie hardly looked like he’d been crying at all.

Eddie took another sip of his coffee, looking thoughtful. “I heard a rumor that Bowers is into buy-resell lately, but is it really a rumor if we all know it’s true?” he said. “Maybe Ben said something.”

Beverly frowned. “But why would he try to *kill* him over that?” she wondered quietly. Eddie choked on his coffee.

“Excuse me?” he asked, slamming his mug on the table. It landed with a loud sound that made Beverly flinch. “Sorry, Bev.”

“It’s fine,” she said. “Bowers almost hit Ben with his truck last night and... and I’m pretty sure it was on purpose.” She almost felt bad telling Eddie anything, except that Eddie was one of those people who heard just about everything that happened on site. He said it was because he was so small, no one really noticed him if he wasn’t in garb. If there was something sketchy going on, he would be the first to know.

“Don’t know,” he said. “I’ll keep an ear out, though.”

She supposed that was as good as she was going to get. “Thanks, Eddie.” She finished the last of her coffee, got up to put her mug in the sink, and turned to look at him with her hands on her hips. “Now, since we’re both awake at this fine hour, help me paint some horns, would you? I’m almost out of Homestucks.”

Several hours later, Eddie left to get food and Beverly found herself sitting on her couch alone. The country station she’d put on ages ago was still playing in the background, the grating voice of singer she didn’t recognize swelling through the trailer. There were horns perched all around her, drying on every available surface. Her heart felt indescribably heavy, and she wasn’t sure why.

Distantly, she registered the sound of her phone dinging with a new

notification. It was probably Eddie asking if she wanted anything, or Mike checking in, or maybe Ben responding to the last silly gif she'd sent him a few minutes before. Or maybe, it was Lewis, asking how the weekend had gone. She knew that she had to call him soon, as manager it was her job to check in every Monday.

She couldn't bring herself to check the phone.

The world felt murky and distant and fake. She didn't even feel like she was really there.

Always be my girl, Bevvie.

She jolted violently out of her stupor, falling off the couch as she scrambled to get away from the voice in her head. It had been years since she'd last seen her father, carted out of the house in a body bag when she was twelve, but she could hear him like it was yesterday.

"I am twenty-five years old," she snapped, fully aware that she was talking to herself. "Stop acting like a goddamn child."

"Beverly?" That was Mike's voice, outside of the trailer, but for one desperate moment, she thought it was her father. Despite realizing it wasn't, she still slid a knife out of the knife block on her counter, holding it behind her as she opened the door. It was stupid, but doing so made her feel just a little bit safer.

Sure enough, it was merely Mike standing at the foot of her steps, his face twisted with concern. "You okay?" he asked at the sight of her. Beverly realized she was still in her pajamas, her hair was probably a mess, and she had fallen asleep before she finished removing her makeup the previous night so her face was likely a mess of blue and purple glitter. And then, of course, there were tear tracks down her cheeks, cutting through the make up.

"I'll be okay," she said, letting her grip relax on the knife she was still holding, just a bit. "What brings you to my humble abode, today, Hanlon?"

Mike still looked concerned, but he dropped it. That was why she loved him - he didn't push unless he needed to. "I'm having a potluck

dinner Wednesday night,” he said. “Friends, not Gamers. You and Eddie want to come?”

Beverly’s shoulders relaxed when he clarified that no gamers would be there. A lot of them were really nice, she knew, but something about a couple of them really freaked her out. It was the look in their eyes when they looked at her - like she was a piece of meat instead of a human woman. It made her feel like she couldn’t breathe. “I’ll let Eddie know,” she said with a grin. “We’ll be there, with chili.”

“Nice,” Mike said. His eyes drifted to her right hand, which was now dangling by her side. “Uh, what’s with the knife?”

Beverly’s eyes widened. “Nothing!” she said quickly, hiding it behind her back again. “Well, I gotta go get changed so I can go get the stuff to make that chili. See ya later, Mike!” She slammed the door shut on him, wincing a little at the abruptness of it all. He was going to be so fucking worried about her, she knew. If she wasn’t careful, he would call Lewis or tell Eddie that he thought something was wrong, and then *they’d* be worried, and someone would call her aunt and there would be this whole big fuss and she would feel awful. She hated worrying them.

It was okay, though. Because Beverly was just fine.

To prove it to herself, she picked up her phone, replied to Ben with a grin, and then headed for her clothing tub to change into overalls.

She was totally fucking fine. The past was in the past, and it was going to stay there, and nothing about it was going to hurt her.

At least, that was what she was telling herself.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from Brave as a Noun by AJJ, a song I strongly recommend to anyone looking to get into folk punk

6. is it a great or little thing we fought

Summary for the Chapter:

in which i vent way too fuckin much with my boy stan here

Notes for the Chapter:

apparently i can only write stan if i'm writing angst, so that's f u n. sorry for the delay in this chapter, the last couple of weekends wore me tf out and i'm suddenly really grateful i don't have to go to LARF after this show ends.

warnings: stan has anxiety, depression, and OCD in this fic. there's no particular scenes, really, but just references to that throughout the entire chapter. also he smokes a cigarette near the end, because i love projecting ig

as always, feel free to shoot me a message at eddiesnapback on tumblr (or comment on the chapter) if you'd prefer a recap! take care of yourself
xx

Week One (Tuesday Night)

Stan was nervous. He hadn't been nervous in a long time, not like this. Mike had invited him to his dinner, which was being held at the campground. Stan didn't know whether being around Mike, meeting new people, or the prospect of all the dirt that seemed to permeate every surface at campgrounds scared him more. He straightened the cuffs of his cardigan again, checked that the container of cookies he'd made was safely tucked into his messenger bag, and ran his hand through his hair to smooth the curls one last time before he got out of the car.

In theory, he knew where the Gamer's encampment was, but as he walked through the campground, he grew increasingly lost. There

were just so many tents and trailers and RVs, and he felt very, very lost. Stan's palms began to sweat, and he pulled them into his sleeves and forced himself to take deep breaths to calm down.

"Are y-you alright?" someone asked from behind him, causing Stan to whip around. There was a *very* handsome man, tall and thin with neatly parted auburn hair, standing the the pathway holding a plate covered with tin foil, his eyebrows furrowed in concern as he looked at Stan.

Stan felt his cheeks turning pink. "I'm fine," he said stiffly, crossing his arms over his chest. "Just a little lost. I'm trying to find my friend Mike." A surge of warmth shot through his chest as he called Mike his friend. They'd never actually discussed whether they were really friends, but Stan figured they were. He'd been invited to Mike's celebratory potluck thing, after all. That seemed like a friend thing to do.

(He pushed down the part of him that worried that Mike had just been nice and wasn't actually expecting Stan to say yes. If he thought about that too much, he might back out. Even the fleeting thought made him worried, and he just barely resisted the urge to snap his fingers three times to dispel the thought.)

"Hanlon?" the man asked, raising an eyebrow. He held up the plate in his hands. "I'm headed th-there too. Walk with me?"

Stan felt some of the stress leave him at that. "Great, awesome, thank you so much..." He trailed off, suddenly aware that he hadn't bothered to ask the stranger's name. (Suddenly aware that following strangers through a campground as night approached was a terrible idea, was the start of a thousand missing persons cases, but he ignored that thought.)

"Bill," the man said.

"Nice to meet you, Bill. I'm Stan."

They walked in silence after that, until they began approaching a circle of campers and tents marked with a large, sloppily painted sign. The sign was bright yellow and red, with the words "GAMERS

ENCAMPMENT” across it in horrendous blue block letters. It was crooked on the post, which Stan was pretty certain was a purposeful move, considering how perfectly straight all the signs in the Gaming Glen always were. It still made his palms itch.

“That s-stupid sign,” Bill said with a sigh. “Mike and Jason keep trying to get th-them to at least straighten it out, but Tom Th-Thumb says that it’s p-p- ugh! That it’s p-part of the charm or something.”

Stan wrinkled his nose. “I disagree,” he said, shaking his head. He followed Bill past the sign, around a pair of tents, and then he saw Mike.

He’s pretty sure no one should look as good in an old flannel shirt as Mike does, though the baseball tee that Bill was rocking should also not have looked as nice as it did. Mike’s smile lit up the entire campground, and suddenly he was very glad he’d decided to come after all.

“Bill! Stan!” Mike called, waving wildly. “I just put the burgers on.”

It was only then that Stan realized that there were other people there. A short man with dark hair combed back from his face and a small frown, and a woman with chin-length red hair and freckles were both sitting in folding chairs - Stan resisted the urge to shudder - deeply engrossed in conversation. He pulled his cookies out of the bag, checked that they still looked okay, and carefully placed them at the corner of the table, next to a pile of napkins.

“Richie and B-Ben aren’t here yet?” Bill asked, putting his plate down on a card table that is covered in food and plastic cups. To Stan’s relief, he didn’t remove the tin foil, so whatever was underneath wasn’t exposed to the dust of the grounds. He noticed that *everything* was still covered, actually. His heart soared at the thought that Mike may have done that on purpose after Stan told him about his issues with dirtiness.

(It was unlikely, they probably just didn’t want flies. No one cared about Stan enough to remember things like that about him.)

“Not yet,” Mike said. “But Beverly and Eddie are! Pull up chair, guys,

grab a beer. Eddie, Bev, this is Stanley and Bill. Stan does birds and Bill does henna, and they're both awesome."

The two other people, presumably Bev and Eddie, waved. Bill fished a bottle of beer out of the ice chest by the table and dropped into a dirty folding chair with casual ease. Stan remained standing. He couldn't stop thinking about how disgusting those chairs had to be, sitting out in the rain all the time and getting moldy and gross and dirty *dirty dirty*.

Stan hid his hand behind his back and snapped his fingers three times in quick succession, then three more, then three again, until he was able to calm himself down. No one seemed to notice except Mike, who was *definitely* watching him from the corner of his eye. Great, now Stan looked crazy.

"Hey, Stan," Mike said, and he braced himself for the questioning that usually came from others seeing his compulsive tic. Instead, he pointed to a chair that was still in the carrying bag with a tag sticking from it. "That one's new, just got it this morning, if you want to grab it."

"Thank you," Stan whispered, sighing in relief. He grabbed the chair and removed it from its bag in one easy movement. He could handle that. That was no problem. He then put the chair down beside Bill's and grabbed his own beer from the ice chest and a red solo cup from the table. The others may be alright with the glass bottles, but he preferred to at least pretend to be civilized.

Bill looked up as he sat down and smiled brightly at him. A flutter of butterflies filled his stomach at the action, which he tried his hardest to suppress.

"So, Stanley," the woman, Beverly, called, making Stan jump. "I haven't seen you around the circuit before. Are you a newbie?"

"Nah, a local," he said, then paused. "Well, sort of. I do falconry for shows in the area - I do Pennsylvania, Great Lakes, and a couple others, too, and I guess I did *technically* get into faires by selling bird whistles like, six years ago, but I haven't been on the road in five." He was talking too much. He needed to shut up. They didn't care,

they didn't care, they didn't-

"That's really cool," the short man, Eddie, said. "I just sell ears, which doesn't sound nearly as exciting."

Beverly rolled her eyes, nudging him in the calf with her toe. "Your boss is *right here*, Eddie," she said, but there was a big smile on her face as she did.

Stan felt himself relaxing as the conversation continued. He remembered, suddenly, what it had been like that first year, before he'd stumbled upon the New-England-Midwest Bird Sanctuary and immediately put down roots. Back when he'd been nineteen years old, and barely able to drag himself out of bed in the morning (*you're twenty-five and still can't drag yourself out of bed, Stanley, who are you fooling*), when Patty had dragged him to the Atlanta show to visit her high school friends and they'd hired him for the next show in their circuit.

"Spaghetti-os!"

Eddie flinched violently all of a sudden as a lanky man with a truly atrocious Hawaiian shirt came bounding through the circle of tents. "That's not my name, Tozier," he snapped, crossing his arms over his chest. Then he yelped, as he had immediately proceeded to spill his beer down the front of his sweater in the process.

"It could be," Probably-Tozier, said with a wink, dropping a bag of potato chips onto the table. He turned towards Mike. "Hey there, Hanlon, long time, no see!"

Mike grinned back, and it was stupidly attractive. "Hi, Richie," he said. "I put in a good word for you with Boss, but you know we already have a Veggie guy."

Richie's shoulders dropped a fraction. "I know," he said, sounding suddenly sullen. "Thanks for trying, man."

The man standing behind Richie looked distinctly uncomfortably, and Stan could relate to that. He shifted uncomfortably until his eyes landed on Beverly, and then his face lit up. "Bev! Hi!"

“Hi, Ben!” she exclaimed, throwing herself out of her chair to hug him. Ben looked startled at the sudden hug, but when she pulled away he had a bright smile on his face that made Stan look away with a grin.

Soon, everyone fell into conversations around Stan, and he was left alone in his chair, staring at the fire as it crackled in front of him. Maybe he *shouldn't* have come, after all. He was clearly the odd man out here - he didn't know anyone, didn't do shows on the road anymore like everyone else did, and didn't recognize any of the names that he overheard. He didn't belong here.

He suddenly stood up, slipping his hands into the pockets of his khaki slacks in an attempt to look casual and unbothered and not like they were shaking so badly that he was about to fall apart. “I’m going to find the privy,” he lied smoothly, taking a few backwards steps towards the sign he and Bill had passed earlier.

Mike raised his head, smiling dropping just a fraction. He tilted his head, studying Stan for a just a moment, and then nodded. “Take a left at the Gamer sign, follow the path, it’s not too far,” he grabbed a flashlight and tossed it over. Stan nearly dropped it, having to dive after it as it spun away from his hands.

The moment he was past the tents, Stan took a deep breath and nearly choked on it. “You can fuckin’ do this, Uris,” he snapped to himself, crossing his arms over his chest as he walked. He was *fine*.

His hands shook as he fished a packet of cigarettes out of his pocket. He glanced around subconsciously before he lit it, taking a deep inhale that he wished wasn't as comforting as it was.

“Didn’t take you for the kinda guy who smoked, Stanley Uris,” Mike said from behind him, making him jump.

“Shit, don’t scare me like that, Mike,” Stan said, turning towards him only slightly.

Mike hummed in response, moving the few steps to the side so he could look him in the eyes. “Something wrong? You seem... I don’t know, off,” he said. Stan hated the way that his heart jumped at the

fact that Mike had *noticed*.

"I'm fine. Just get a little anxious around new people. I'll be alright in a minute."

"Hey, these are good people," Mike said. His voice was soft, gentle. Stan didn't know how to explain that that wasn't the problem. But something in Stan's face must have given him away, because his eyes softened impossibly more. "Come hang by me, I won't leave you alone."

Stan dropped the butt of his cigarette, stubbing it out with the heel of his shoe. He bent down to pick it up once it was out, pulling a tissue from his pocket to wrap it in before stashing it in his pocket again. "Promise?" he asked quietly, refusing to look up at Mike's face. He hated how small his voice was.

"Promise. Come on," Mike said.

He moved to follow him, then paused. "Hey, Mike," he called. The man paused too, turning to face him with a concerned furrow to his brow. Stan held up the pack of cigarettes. "Started when I was seventeen. Helps with the anxiety but... I'm trying to quit."

A smile broke across Mike's face, and even though his eyes were still soft, Stan liked that expression much better. "I'm glad," he said. "The world needs you around for a long time, Stanley Uris."

For the first time in a long time, Stan thought he might believe that.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from Drunken Lullabies by Flogging Molly, a classing celtic rock band that you should def check out

7. we'll stick together, you and i

Summary for the Chapter:

georgie and bill both need several hugs i'm sorry

Notes for the Chapter:

i accidentally made georgie's story line angsty, which was absolutely not the intention, so um..... whoops..... this was not the direction this chapter was meant to go at all. sorry georgie, sorry bill, and sorry readers...

warnings: mentions of kidnapping and torture of child (Georgie), negligent parents, references to verbal abuse, ptsd, anxiety, and depression. also bill has a nightmare, which is in italics, and that has mentions of blood as well as some of the other things previously mentioned

if any of these things will trigger you too much Please feel free to shoot me a message on tumblr at eddiesnapback and i will recap the chapter for you! take care of yourselves please!

Week One (Friday Night)

Bill was busy squeezing lemon juice for the weekend when his phone buzzed. He ignored it, preoccupied with trying to finish squeezing the last drops from the lemon half he was currently working on. The buzzing stopped after a few seconds, but started up again almost immediately. He cursed, dropping the lemon rind into a bowl and wiping off his hands so he could check his phone.

He cursed louder when he saw his little brother's name on the screen.

George Denbrough was eighteen years old, a senior in high school, and probably Bill's best friend in the whole world. He also never called Bill unless there was something wrong, and usually that something had to do with their parents.

Their parents who, after George disappeared for two months when he was six, turned into neglectful shells of their former selves. Who, when his brother returned, had left Bill alone to take care of George almost entirely on his own for years, which was made so much harder by his brother's PTSD and Bill's own mounting mental health issues. His parents who had, somewhere along the line, decided that that the way to make up for their absence in their sons' lives was to be as overbearing as possible, to the point that Bill had actively avoided coming home except for Christmas and George's birthday for three full years. It had physically pained him to leave his brother alone in that house, but even both his therapist and George's had agreed that it was what was best for Bill's mental health.

Still, a part of him felt like he'd abandoned his little brother.

He answered the call, and George's face filled the screen. He was outside, and the sun was setting, and he was only wearing his soccer jersey and a fleece jacket. Just the thought made Bill shiver. "Hey, Juh-Georgie," he said, frowning down at the screen.

"Hi, Bill," his brother replied. He was out of breath, which made Bill frown even harder. "How was the weekend? Opening weekend in... In Maine, right?"

"It was good," Bill said. "W-What's wrong?"

"Nothing!" George waved him off, but there was something in his blue eyes that gave him away. Something was definitely wrong. Bill narrowed his eyes, and George seemed to wither under his gaze. "Okay fine, Jesus. You know, you look like Dad when you do that."

Bill flinched. He loved his dad, he did, but... But there was a strong part of him that hated knowing anything about him resembled Zack Denbrough. "Are y-you okay?" he asked again in lieu of a response.

George glanced away from the camera. "It's stupid," he said.

"St-Stupid is st-still valid." Now that he really looked at his brother, he could see the way that George's face was a little too pale, even in the cool fall air. His shoulders were tense, pulled all the way up under his ears so he looked like a turtle hiding in his shell. He wasn't

even wearing a beanie, which was rare for him in the fall. In all, George looked like he was about to have a panic attack, or maybe like he'd just come down from one.

"They're suffocating me, Billy," he said, voice barely a whisper. Bill leaned closer to the camera at the sound of the childhood nickname, one that George had stopped using almost entirely after he'd been kidnapped. The movement jostled the pitcher of lemon juice in Bill's lap, spilling a few drops onto his sweatpants, but he hardly noticed.

"What happened?" Bill's voice was soft now, hard edged with a serious tone that he rarely used if he could help it. George bit his lip in a barely suppressed flinch.

"We were talking about college apps on the way home from practice," he said, and it was only now that Bill realized his brother's voice was shaking. "And Dad asked me what I'm going to do. And I said... I said 'I don't know,' and that you told me that college exists to figure that kind of thing out and he. He said that you were a 'lazy good-for-nothing' and 'how would Bill know, he wasted out money on Creative Writing and then dropped out,' and that I'm going to end up wasting everyone's time and money and... and..." He took a deep, shuddering breath, and closed his eyes tightly.

Bill swallowed. "And?"

"And haven't I done that enough already, Billy?" George opened his eyes and Bill felt like he was staring right into him. His heart broke at the raw edge to his baby brother's voice. "I mean - with all the therapy and the PT and all the prosthetics and the soccer team and... maybe you all would have been better off if I had never come home."

"Juh-George!" Bill snapped, eyes wide. This wasn't the first time that his brother had expressed that particular sentiment. George was prone to bouts of depression and anxiety, something which his therapist had cited as an effect of the trauma he'd experienced so young. Some of the things his kidnapper had said to him stuck with him, engrained themselves into his young brain, and Bill wasn't sure they'd ever really been scrubbed free.

Looking at George right now, Bill didn't see much difference between

the young man in front of him and the six-year-old boy laying in a hospital bed after being tortured for two months.

“Muh-My offer still stands. I’ve got enough s-s-s-fuck! I’ve got enough saved for an RV now.” He paused, considering. The original offer had been for George to leave Derry and come live with Bill on the road once he graduated high school. In the three months since, his brother had oscillated wildly between wanting to join him the moment he stepped off stage at graduating, and being determined to stick their parents out until he graduated college. But there was a new desperation in his face, one that Bill hadn’t seen before, that had been causing Bill to rethink that deal for the past two months. “If you... If you get really desperate, my door is o-open now. S-Say the word, and I’ll come g-get you, and you can finish sk-sk-sk- your classes online.”

George looked hesitant. “You mean that?” he asked quietly.

Bill’s heart ached for his brother, who looked so small in that moment. “Always, k-kiddo. Th-think on it, okay? Let me know.” He paused, watching George shiver and cover his nose with the collar of his jacket. “Why are y-you outside in the c-cold, by the way?”

George’s cheeks flushed. “I kinda bolted as soon as Dad parked the car. Didn’t think about the consequences,” he admitted.

“Dumbass,” Bill said fondly, tucking his hands into his pockets. He glanced up at the time and winced. “G-Get home, soon, okay? Don’t st-stay out in the cold too long. I have to finish making th-this lemon juice and get some food, but I’ll t-text you later.”

“Okay, Bill,” George said, and Bill was relieved to see him smile. “See ya.”

“Love you, Juh-Georgie.” Bill added just before hanging up. “For what it’s worth, I’m s-so glad you came home to us.” There was a flash of his brother’s bright smile before call ended, but it was just enough that Bill was sure he’d heard.

Someone was screaming, and Bill didn't know where it was coming from. He ran through the trees, away from the sound of branches breaking behind him. Something was chasing him.

"Billy!"

Bill darted behind a tree and came face to face with George. But this George was six years old, one arm a bleeding stump cut off at the elbow as it had likely looked when he'd first been found by police. This George was staring at him huge blue eyes and begging him to save him. This George was so small, so helpless, and when Bill reached for him, he disappeared into smoke.

"Big Bill! Help me!"

He whipped around to find Richie, staring at him with wide, terrified eyes. Bill grabbed for him, but he too started to disappear. It was only once he started to fade away that his eyes rolled back into his head and he let out a strangled scream.

"Bill!"

Mike was beside him now, reaching for him. His hands were covered in blood, and then Bill realized it was coming from his stomach. He managed to grab onto Mike's hand for just a moment before he, too, was gone.

"Billy!"

There was George as he was now, eighteen years old. A man, almost. Tall and broad shouldered, with one prosthetic arm that was... was soaked in blood. His white soccer jersey was stained red. "You can't help me," he whispered, pointing with his remaining hand behind Bill. Bill whipped around and came face to face with his parents, staring at him with huge, terrifying smiles. They reached for him and-

Bill woke up gasping for breath.

He glanced at the can of Monster sitting next to him on the floor of the van. "No m-m-more energy drinks," he said firmly, pushing the can away. Then he glanced at the time and hissed out a curse.

It was nine thirty, which meant he was late. He had fifteen minutes

to get down to his tent before his employees showed up, and thirty minutes until cannon. He threw himself out of the nest of pillows he'd made in the back of the van, dragging himself over to the tubs that served as his dresser.

It took him seven minutes to yank on a pair of harem pants, a tunic and a vest, and to tie on his sandals. He tied a scarf around his hips while he stumbled out of the van. All he needed to do was grab his bank from under the front seat, grab the henna and lemon juice from the fridge in his box trailer, and then he could hightail it down to the tent.

He made it there with only two minutes to spare, and immediately set to work undoing the sides of the tent.

Audra appeared right as he finished opening the tent up, looking calm and collected. Her red hair was in series of elaborate braids, her clothes were neatly pressed, and, most importantly, she held two paper cups in her hands. "Hey, Denbrough," she said with a grin. "I come bearing caffeine."

"I knew th-there was a reason I hired you," Bill said, extending grabby hands towards one of the cups. He sighed as the warmth spread through the palms of his hands. "You know, besides the fact th-th-that you're a g-g-g-g... you do really nice work."

Audra laughed, moving past him to set her coffee down on a table. "Okay, sure," she teased. Then her eyebrow raised, and she looked past Bill, raising her voice ever-so-slightly, though still carefully pleasant. "Can we help you?"

There was a grunt in response, and Bill turned around to see who it was. His face paled when he recognized the man in front of him.

"Ethan Carmichael," Bill said, raising an eyebrow. "W-What brings you by?"

The man crossed his arms over his chest and glared at Bill. He was taller than Bill by a good four inches, at least - which was terrifying because Bill was nearly six feet himself - and looked to be made of solid muscle. "Watch your back, kid," he growled, before turning

back the way he'd come. Bill shuddered, taking a long sip of his coffee just to get rid of the cold that had flooded him at the sight of Carmichael's stare.

"Fuck, what was his problem?" Audra asked once he was around the corner. She turned to look at Bill, furrowing her eyebrows in confusion.

"Th-th-th-that's Adrienne's boyfriend," Bill explained. "Th-The woman who did henna here l-last year? Sh-She got banned from site, and he's... not happy."

"That's not your fault though, you weren't even in Derry," Audra said. "Do you even *know* Adrienne?"

Bill shook his head and started counting out tubes of henna. "Never m-met the woman. But th-there's a lot of people unhappy with me for tuh-tuh-taking her spot. Carmichael's just one of many. Just happens that he's a big guy and actually kind of scary."

"But that's not fair!"

"L-L-Life isn't fair," Bill said with a shrug. "I took her spot, so I'm th-the bad guy. They just want someone to blame and don't want to admit that Adrienne actually d-d-d-did-did... Adrienne actually did anything wrong."

Audra shook her head and stood up to refill the container of cotton balls. "Still fucked up," she said seriously. "Like, objectively I know all of this, but I've never seen it happen. God, if they're gonna hate anyone, go hate the craft coordinator or something, fuck."

Bill shrugged, but didn't answer. They finished setting up the booth in silence - Bill had just gotten the cash box set up when Lucy, the local teenager who was working as host that weekend, showed up, two minutes before cannon.

"Sorry I'm late, my mom overslept," she panted. "We're staying on-site tonight, though, so I should be on time tomorrow."

"Y-You're fine, kiddo," Bill said. "You still got here b-before-" he was cut off by the loud boom of the cannon firing, and they all laughed.

“You got here before cannon.”

Audra sat Lucy down to touch up the henna along forearm while Bill finished fluffing pillows carefully. The first few patrons started to come over the hill and he grimaced. Today wasn't going to be a good day, he could feel it.

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from Never Alone by the Dropkick Murphys

opinion time: should i give georgie his own pov chapters or should he just kind of be intertwined with bill's? lmk in the comments because i have plans for either way

8. she keeps these teeth around her neck

Summary for the Chapter:

this is a formal apology to Beverly Marsh

Notes for the Chapter:

hello hi it's been a hot minute, but between all the shit i've had going on, including moving back to FL and visiting the Sarasota show and the holiday I haven't had much time to work on my fics but I'm back! might be another brief break in the next few weeks as I try to get my life together and finish working on my Secret Santa gift but i will try to return with semi-regular updates soon! thank you for sticking with me lol

warnings for this chapter: Tom Rogan, implied abusive/stalking behavior, and a ref to Bev's dad. please stay safe yall

Pirate Weekend (Saturday)

Beverly jumped as Richie appeared next to her. He looked vaguely uneasy, but smiled nonetheless. His dark eyes darted away from her, across the street, when she met them. "M'lady Calliope," he said, bowing low. One of the little girls gathered beside Beverly's cart giggled. "I come bearing a rose for thee."

Beverly's eyebrows raised. She hadn't told Eddie, but someone had sent her two roses the previous Sunday via Richie. She'd thrown them out once he told her it was a patron - patrons sending roses to her made her deeply uncomfortable, as they were usually enamored with her faire persona and her costume, and really knew nothing about her. One man had even been affronted when she'd dropped her accent and her smile to turn him down, accusing her of lying to him by pretending to be British. There had been a couple incidents in the past for both Beverly and Eddie that had ended up involving faire security, and she really especially hated that.

“Oh?” she asked, setting down the pair of horns that she was carefully painting. “And who sends me this rose? Is it, perhaps, from my friend Zephyr?”

Richie shook his head. “No, m’lady, it comes from a Secret Admirer. He says, ‘your beauty grows with every day that I see you,’” he leaned a little closer, his voice dropping. “It’s the same patron. Do you want me to cut him off?”

“Please,” Beverly whispered, chewing on her lip. The surrounding patrons at her cart were cooing at the kind gesture, but it made Beverly uneasy. She had a *very* bad feeling about this. Her voice raised, and she put on her accent again. “Thank you, sir Richard. I’ll treasure it always.”

She took the rose, carefully stashing it with her things inside the cart, out of sight. She would take it back by the rose booth on her lunch break, and for now, she didn’t have to look at it. There was a heavy feeling in her gut. She tried to tell herself that she was getting worried about nothing.

“I must deliver a present to the good fairy Zephyr,” Richie said, mischief gleaming in his eyes. “I shall see you soon, my lovely fairy friend.”

Beverly watched him go for a second, before a little girl tugged on her baggy red wrap pants. She bent down, smiling brightly at the little one. “How can I help you, princess?” she asked, tilting her head.

“Are you a pirate or a fairy?” the little girl asked, her brows furrowing.

Bev grinned, turning to show off the wooden sword strapped to her belt. “Both, if it pleases ya, princess,” she said. “D’ya want a trinket?”

The little girl tilted her head. Bev straightened a little, digging into one of the pouches hanging off her belt. She produced a small vial filled with glitter, holding out to the girl. “Fairy dust, makes your wishes come true,” she said.

The girl’s eyes lit up. “For me?” she asked.

“For you,” Bev confirmed. “From Calliope the pirate fairy.”

The girl gasped, and whirled towards her mother, who was watching the scene with a smile. “Lookit, look what I got!” she cried, holding the vial up to her mom. The mom’s face dropped a little, and Bev recognized the look in her eyes.

“Ah, princess,” she said quickly. “Be careful with that, now, you don’t want it ta break. The dust’ll lose its magic if you let it out of the bottle.” The little girl nodded seriously at that, and her mother mouthed her thanks in Bev’s direction. Bev just smiled. She was well practiced in working with small children, and she knew exactly what would happen if she didn’t tell them that.

Glitter. Everywhere.

She shuddered to think of it.

She turned towards a pair of teenage girls to help them put a pair of horns onto their heads, all thoughts of her secret admirer forgotten.

About an hour later, Beverly found herself darting between the crowds towards Eddie’s cart. Her break was only half an hour, but she wanted to talk to him - if she was getting weird flowers from a patron, she wanted him to know, just in case anything happened.

“Excuse me! Calliope?”

A man’s voice calling her fairy name made her freeze, her shoulders stiffening at the sound. She turned slowly, coming face to face with a tall, broad-shouldered man with a well-groomed mop of dark hair falling over his brow. “Can I help you?” she asked, smiling tightly.

“I just wanted to ask if you liked the roses,” the man said, flashing a grin with too many teeth. Beverly felt her stomach flip uncomfortably and her heart pounded in her chest just a little harder than before.

“Were they from you?” she asked, forcing herself to stay calm and falsely cheerful, though her accent was long gone.

The man nodded, and held out his hand. “Tom Rogan,” he said, giving her a smile that seemed, as far as she could tell, genuine. Beverly shook his hand, but didn’t offer her own name in return. Let him think her name was Calliope. It was safer that way.

“Listen, I appreciate it a lot, but I’ve got to go check on my coworker, and I have a really short break,” she said, forcing herself to sound apologetic. In truth, she wanted to get away from this Tom Rogan fellow as fast as humanly possible. His smile faltered just a little, and something like annoyance flashed in his eyes, but he nodded nonetheless.

“Well don’t let me keep you,” he said. “I’ll see you around, Beverly.”

Beverly was halfway to Eddie’s cart before she remembered that she’d never told Tom her real name.

When she got to the cart, she was shaking. She shoved her hands into her pockets and forced a smile as she approached Eddie, who was frowning and looked strangely... glittery? As she got closer, she could see a very sparkly rose lying abandoned in the dirt next to his feet.

“What happened?” she asked, biting on her lip to hide a smirk. Eddie glared at her, glancing towards a couple who was inspecting the mermaid ear display.

“I got glitter-bombed,” he complained, shaking his head for emphasis. Pieces of silver glitter floated from his hair and filled the air around him. “I’m never gonna wash this out of my hair.”

“That sounds extremely unfortunate,” Beverly said. She shook her head.

Out of the corner of her eye, she swore she saw Tom’s dark hair and the crisp red button down he was wearing. Her smile melted off of her face, and she curled her hands into fists at her side. But when she turned her head, there was no sign of him.

She had to be going crazy.

“Hey, you good?” Eddie asked, taking a step away from his cart. Beverly turned back to him and gave him a strained smile.

“Nope!” she exclaimed, shaking her head. “But I don’t have time to worry about it.”

His eyebrows furrowed, concern in his eyes. “Talk later?”

“Absolutely,” Beverly agreed. With that she turned on her heels and darted off into the crowd, her hands shaking at her sides as she hurried towards one of Vendor exits near a food booth. She slipped through the gate, squeezing past a platform stacked with water bottles, and darted towards the campground.

Just a couple minutes in her trailer would give her time to calm down. She could grab a snack and be back before he break ended, and everything would be fine.

“Beverly!”

“Fuck, what?” she snapped, jumping about a foot in the air. Her shoulders were tensed up somewhere around her ears when she turned and came face to face with Ben and Bill. Both men were staring at her like she’d grown a second head, though something about the way that Ben’s were crinkled at the corners read as concern.

She slowly let her shoulders drop. “Sorry guys,” she said. “Just a little jumpy today. What are you two doing back here?”

Ben’s frown pulled a little deeper. “We ran into each other, both of us are just getting off our breaks,” he said. “Are you sure you’re okay, Bev?”

She stared into his dark eyes, and then glanced over at Bill. The other man was now also frowning in concern, his blue eyes narrowed like he was trying to see through her. “Wh-What’s wrong, Bev?” he asked.

“Nothing’s wrong!” she squeaked, backing towards the path that would take her to the campground. “I gotta go, guys, lunch break is almost over and I haven’t actually had lunch! See ya!” She turned

and started walking away, ignoring the way they called after her. For a second, she thought she heard footsteps behind her, but then they stopped, and she could tell that they had given up and were walking back into the festival.

Good - if she got stopped one more time on the way to her trailer, Beverly was going to scream.

Beverly was worried - this Tom Rogan guy had all the trappings of a stalker. Even thinking the word made her cringe. It seemed like an overreaction. (Nevermind that Lewis had told her way back when she was fifteen to look out for the patrons that seemed too interested in her. Nevermind that the look that Rogan had given her had reminded her of her father; just as predatory, like he was planning on chewing her up.)

She felt sick to her stomach, but surely she was overreacting.

Everything was fine.

Wasn't it?

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from Remember Me When You Sing by
Stick and Poke, a truly fantastic female-led folk punk
band

Author's Note:

Thank you for reading! Comments and kudos make
my day!!
come yell at me on tumblr @ eddiesnapback it's a
fun time

fic title from Scarborough Fair by Simon and
Garfunkel